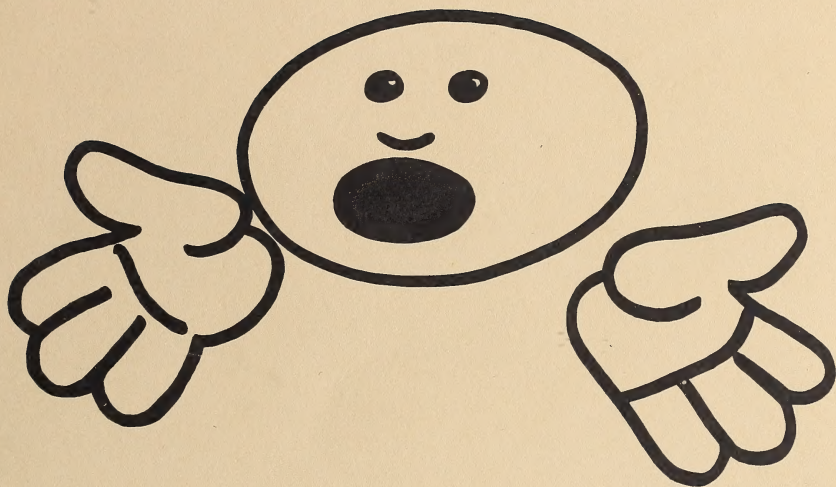


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But...it wasn't really
my fault!



Alberta

TRANSPORTATION
Transportation Safety Branch

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It Wasn't My Fault

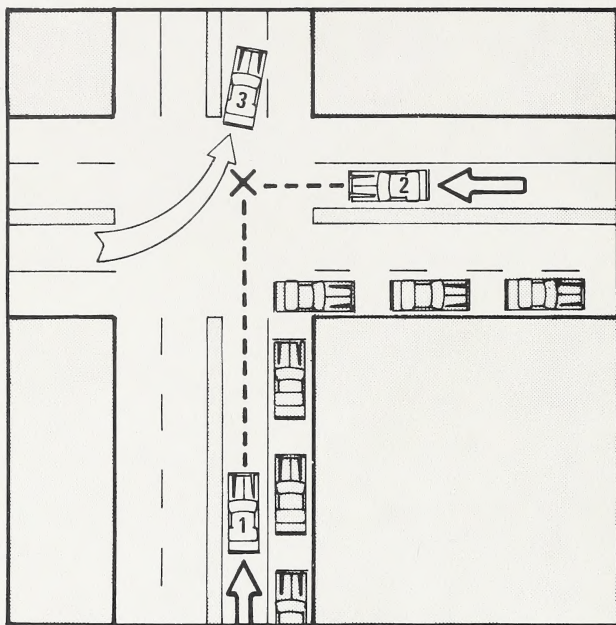
Have you ever said this after a collision? Most drivers have, at one time or another. What they generally mean is that they are not *legally* at fault. It is very rare that a driver in a collision is completely without fault. In most cases there is something he could have done to prevent the collision.

The purpose of this booklet is to help you see how collisions really happen, to see how the "fault" is shared by different drivers. There are thirteen collision reports. Each report is based upon a real collision. The collisions were selected to illustrate the mistakes that people make most often.

We hope that reading this booklet will help you to become a safer driver, and to avoid being in collisions—whether they are "your fault" or not.

2 COLLISION REPORT NUMBER 1

The Case of the Driver Who Was Trapped



Car 1 was approaching an intersection at about 65 km/h. The traffic light had been red for some time. While the driver of Car 1 was still about 60 m from the intersection, he saw that the light was about to change. He figured that it would turn green by the time he reached the intersection, so he did not slow down.

Car 2 was approaching the intersection from the right at the same time. The driver slowed to let Car 3 complete a left turn in front of him. As a result, he was still in the intersection when the light changed. He was hit broadside by Car 1.

The driver and the passenger of Car 2 were both seriously injured. The driver of Car 1, who was not wearing his seat belt or shoulder harness, suffered broken ribs, internal injuries, and massive facial cuts when he hit the steering wheel and windshield.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

● *The driver of Car 1* was legally at fault for this collision. He entered the intersection just as the traffic light turned green. But, he was not driving carefully enough to avoid a collision. The green light allows the driver to proceed **ONLY IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO**.

The driver of Car 1 should *not* have assumed that the intersection would be clear. He should have slowed down and checked in both directions before proceeding.

A green light does not guarantee that the intersection will be clear. Any one of the following drivers could be there:

- (1) A driver who was trapped in the intersection before the light changed.
- (2) A driver who tried to “beat the light” at the last second.
- (3) A driver who didn’t notice the light change until he was too close to stop.
- (4) A driver who was under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- (5) A driver whose car had poor brakes or tires.

The driver of Car 1 did not have his seat belt or shoulder harness fastened before he started to drive. When the car stopped on impact, he kept moving, hitting the steering wheel and windshield. When there is a collision, seat belts and shoulder harnesses are the best possible protection for everyone in the car. But they only protect when people wear them.

● *The driver of Car 2* also helped to cause the collision. Although he saw Car 3 turning left, he entered the intersection on the yellow light. He knew he was going to be “trapped” in the middle of the intersection. But, he didn’t want to wait half a minute for the next green light. For that, he risked his life and that of another person.

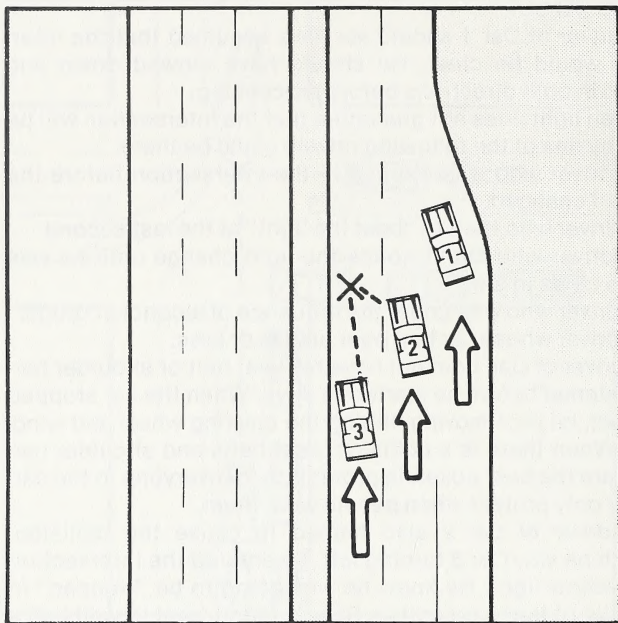
Here is another example of a “trap” at an intersection: A driver starts to make a left turn. Suddenly, he sees a pedestrian crossing the sidestreet and is forced to stop in the path of an oncoming car. Always check your path ahead and make sure it is clear before you start to turn.

Principle Number 1. Do not enter an intersection unless you are sure it is safe, even if you do have a green light. A *green* traffic light does *not* guarantee that it is safe to enter an intersection; a *red* traffic light does *not* automatically stop all approaching vehicles. Be particularly careful just after the light has changed.

Principle Number 2. Do not enter an intersection unless you are sure you can make it all the way through at a safe rate of speed. Any time you have to stop in an intersection, you run the risk of being struck by another car.

Principle Number 3. Fasten your seat belt and shoulder harness before you start your car. You won’t have a chance to do it before the collision.

The Case of the Driver Who Had Eyes but Didn't See



The driver of Car 1 did not notice the sign that read "Right Lane Ends 300 m Ahead", so he kept on driving in the right lane. At the last moment, he was forced to swerve into the middle lane. This, in turn, forced the driver of Car 2 to swerve into the left lane, where he hit Car 3. Cars 2 and 3 both came to rest on the median. The driver of Car 2 suffered a broken shoulder and facial cuts. The driver of Car 3 had two broken ribs.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

The driver of Car 1 was legally at fault. A driver changing lanes must yield the right-of-way to a driver already in a lane. However, his problem began much earlier when he didn't notice the sign warning him that the right lane was coming to an end.

Good drivers make a habit of looking 10 to 15 seconds ahead of their cars. This way they can spot a problem early, while they still have plenty of time to do something about it. In the city, 10 to 15 seconds is about a block ahead. At highway speeds, it's about 400 m or about as far ahead as you can see clearly.

- *The driver of Car 2* might have prevented the collision. He could see that the other driver wasn't paying attention. He could have dropped back to allow room for a last minute swerve.

You can't watch out for everyone else on the road. However, you can learn to spot the people who are most likely to cause you trouble. This includes:

People who cannot see you—such as people whose vision is blocked by snow-covered windows, buildings close to intersections, other cars, and people whose cars have opera windows.

People who are distracted—such as people engaged in conversation, people trying to read house numbers, or children chasing after toys.

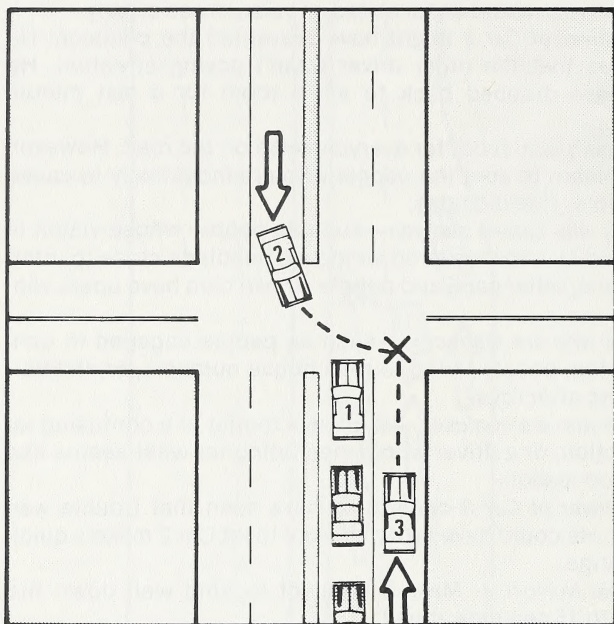
People who are confused—such as a tourist at a confusing intersection, or a driver who is hesitating for what seems like no good reason.

- *The driver of Car 3* could also have seen that trouble was brewing. He could have dropped back to let Car 2 make a quick lane change.

Principle Number 1. Make a habit of looking well down the road, 10 to 15 seconds ahead.

Principle Number 2. Watch out for drivers who are not paying attention, who cannot see well, or who are distracted or confused. Also watch for sudden changes in speed or direction by other drivers. Give them plenty of room.

The Case of the Volunteer Policeman



Cars 1 and 2 were both stopped at the intersection waiting to make left turns. The driver of Car 1 motioned to the driver of Car 2 to start his turn. When the driver of Car 2 started to turn, he was struck broadside by Car 3, which was passing Car 1 in the right lane.

The driver of Car 2 suffered several fractures and a strained back. The passenger in the right front seat of Car 2 was badly hurt. The driver of Car 3 was wearing a seat belt and shoulder harness and escaped with a few bruises.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

● *The driver of Car 2 was legally at fault because he turned in front of a car going straight through the intersection. Car 1 was blocking his view of oncoming cars, yet he tried to make a left turn simply because the driver of Car 1 waved him on.*

Any time a driver cannot see a clear path ahead, he must assume it is *not* safe to proceed. In this case, the driver of Car 2 should have edged forward as far as he could without putting the nose of his car in the way of oncoming traffic. He could have looked through the windows of Car 1 to check for possible traffic coming in the outside lane. Above all, he should not have put his faith in another driver's signal for him to start his turn. The driver of Car 1 may have meant well, or he may have just wanted Car 2 out of his way so that *he* could get a better view of the oncoming traffic.

- *The driver of Car 1* helped to cause the collision by signalling the driver of Car 2 to start his turn. He may have thought the way was clear, but he should not have attempted to direct traffic.

This kind of thing can also happen when one driver wants to pass another on a two-lane road. The driver in front sometimes signals the second driver when to pass, which is also unsafe. If the driver behind you wants to pass, you might move a little to the right to give him a better view of the road ahead. But don't wave him on. Let him decide for himself when it is safe to pass.

- *The driver of Car 3* could have prevented the collision by being more cautious as he approached the intersection. It was legal to pass on the right since the car ahead in the left lane was signalling a left turn. However, without a clear view to the left, he should have approached the intersection more carefully.

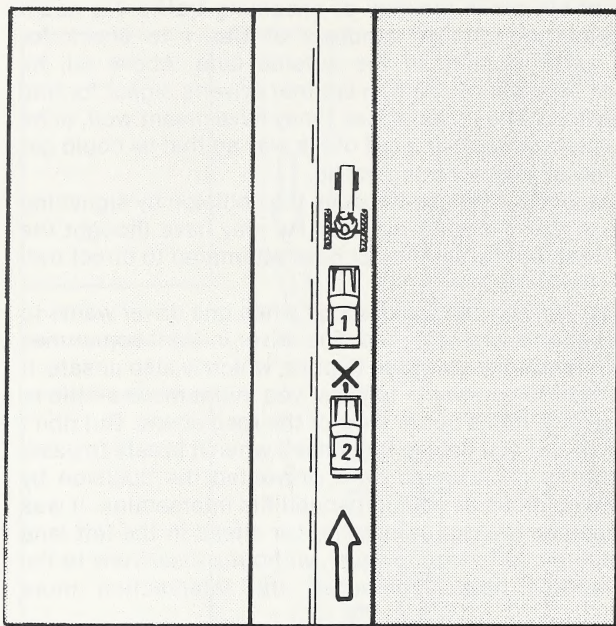
This situation often occurs when your view is blocked by a large truck, a bus, or a car parked close to the corner. Any time you do not have a clear view of an intersection, assume there may be another driver there who can't see you.

Principle Number 1. Make sure there is no oncoming traffic before you start a left turn. If your view is blocked by other cars, try to look through their windows. Edge forward slowly until you have a good view of the outside lane.

Principle Number 2. Approach an intersection cautiously whenever you don't have a clear view. Another driver can't yield the right-of-way to you if he doesn't see you.

Principle Number 3. Don't make decisions for other drivers, and don't trust your life to another driver's decision.

A Case of Too Slow and Too Fast



Cars 1 and 2 were proceeding along a two-lane country road at approximately 80 km/h. The driver of Car 1 suddenly realized he was coming up behind a slow-moving tractor. He started to pass but discovered he was in a “no passing” zone. When he applied his brakes to slow down, he was hit from behind by Car 2.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of the tractor?

● *The driver of Car 2 was legally at fault for following Car 1 too closely and not paying full attention. Whenever one car is following another, the second driver is responsible for avoiding the collision. He is the only one who can control the space between the two cars.*

The driver of Car 2 should have used the “two-second” rule. Here is how it works:

- (1) Pick a shadow or mark on the pavement in the road ahead.
- (2) When the rear bumper of the car ahead of you passes the mark, start counting the seconds it takes you to reach the

same spot. Count “one-thousand-and-one, one-thousand-and-two”.

- (3) If you reach the spot before you count to “one-thousand-and two”, you are following too closely.

In some situations, you need even more following distance. Stay three or four seconds behind the vehicle ahead:

On slippery roads—If the car ahead of you should slow down or stop, you will need more distance to stop your car.

When following a motorcycle—If the motorcycle should fall, you will need the extra distance to avoid hitting the rider.

When following a driver whose view to the rear is blocked—Drivers of trucks, buses, vans, or cars pulling campers or trailers can’t see you very well. They might slow down suddenly without knowing you are behind them. Your view ahead is also obstructed by these vehicles. Your only warning of an emergency up ahead will be the brake lights of the truck or van in front of you. Increase your following distance to allow for such a sudden, unexpected stop when you’re unable to see more than the vehicle just in front of you.

When you have a heavy load or are pulling a trailer—The extra weight adds to your stopping distance, so you need more distance between you and the vehicle ahead in case he stops suddenly.

● *The driver of Car 1* also helped cause the collision. He should have realized that the tractor would be moving very slowly. He should have started to slow down gradually as soon as he saw it. But even when he realized he was going to have to slow down quickly, he could have prevented the collision by warning the driver behind him. He could have done this by tapping his brake pedal quickly to flash his brake lights or by giving the standard hand sign. It is a good idea to signal any time you slow down unexpectedly.

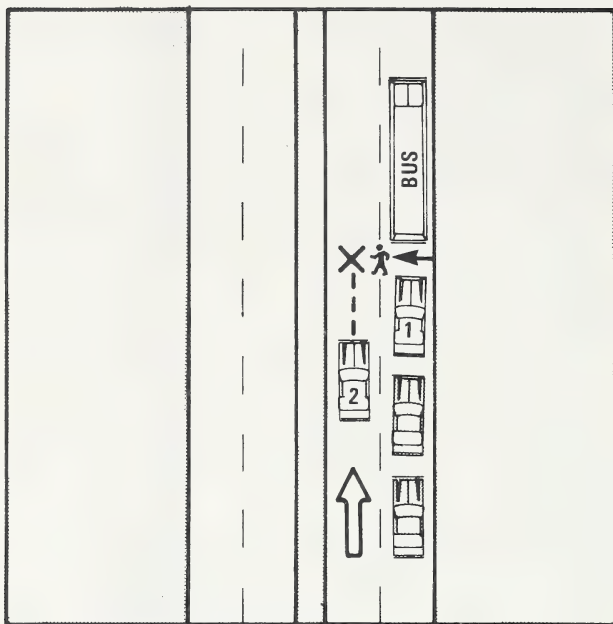
● *The driver of the tractor* should have had a slow moving vehicle sign (an orange triangle with a red border) on the rear of his tractor. Most provinces require that it be put on the back of vehicles that travel under 40 km/h on the highway.

Principle Number 1. Learn to recognize slow moving vehicles such as tractors and road maintenance equipment. Trucks and small cars often move slowly up long grades or immediately after turning onto a highway.

Principle Number 2. Allow enough following distance to avoid hitting a car ahead no matter how suddenly the driver may stop.

Principle Number 3. Check behind you any time you have to slow down when another driver might not expect you to. If there is someone behind you, warn him by flashing your brake lights or giving a hand signal.

The Case of the Invisible Pedestrian



Car 1 stopped behind a city bus in the right lane of a four-lane highway. A passenger got off the bus and began to cross the road between the bus and Car 1. As the pedestrian stepped into the left lane, he was hit by Car 2. The skid marks measured about 30 m, which indicated a speed of about 65 km/h. The pedestrian suffered numerous fractures and internal injuries and died on the way to the hospital.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The pedestrian?

● *The pedestrian* crossed the road in the middle of the block. Therefore, he was considered legally at fault for the collision. The driver of Car 2 was not charged with a traffic violation.

● *The driver of Car 2* was, however, partly to blame. A stopped bus should have called for an automatic “alert”. Where there is a bus, there are likely to be pedestrians, either running to catch the bus or walking away from it. He should have slowed down because his vision was blocked by the bus and the car behind it. It is better to be ready for a problem that does not develop than not be ready for one that does.

Other places that call for an “alert” are:

Intersections—particularly when you are turning a corner. People crossing the street also have a green light and may not be watching out for cars.

Mid-block crosswalks—People feel secure when crossing the street at a marked crosswalk, even though it may be in the middle of a block where drivers don’t expect a pedestrian.

Residential areas, schools, and playgrounds—Children tend to move before they think, and they tend to move fast. Look for them darting out from behind hedges and shrubs and between cars, often on bicycles or skates.

Shopping centres, theaters, skating rinks, or other places where people get together.

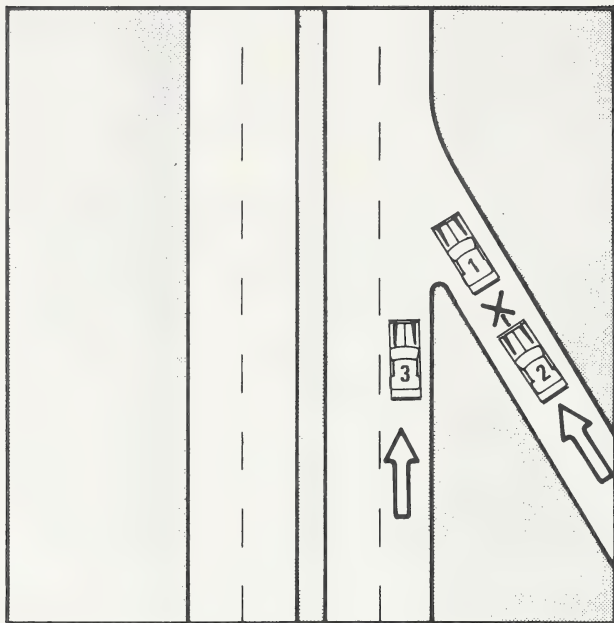
Around ice cream wagons, delivery vans, construction areas, and similar places where people tend to be moving in the street.

● *The driver of Car 1* also might have prevented the collision. He could have warned the pedestrian with his horn or warned the driver of Car 2 by waving his arm out the window. He didn’t have to do it. He might not even have been thanked for it. But he might have saved the pedestrian’s life.

Principle Number 1. Slow down at any place where people are likely to enter, cross, or move about in the street. The faster you are moving, the longer it will take you to stop.

Principle Number 2. Don’t hesitate to give a warning whenever it might prevent a collision. If it turns out to be unnecessary, you haven’t lost anything.

The Driver Who Wasn't Supposed to be There



Car 1 was approaching the end of an entrance ramp to a freeway. Car 2 was coming down the ramp right behind him. Car 3 was approaching in the right lane of the freeway. Just as Car 1 was about to merge with freeway traffic, the driver noticed that Car 3 was too close, so he stopped to let Car 3 pass. The driver of Car 2 thought that Car 1 was going to enter the freeway without stopping. He turned his head to check traffic on the freeway. When he turned back and saw Car 1 had stopped, he slammed on his brakes, but he could not stop in time, and rear-ended Car 1. The driver of Car 1 received a whiplash injury to his neck.

Who was to blame for this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

● *The driver of Car 2 was legally at fault. The law requires that you watch out for the car in front of you no matter what the cir-*

cumstances are. But how do you watch cars in front of you and behind you at the same time?

The best thing is not to try. At an intersection, simply stop and wait for the car ahead to pull away completely. Then you will only have to worry about cars behind you.

On a freeway entrance ramp, of course, you should keep moving. Use the outside rearview mirror to help you check traffic on the freeway. This lets you shift your attention back and forth between traffic behind and traffic ahead. Be sure, however, to turn your head and check over your left shoulder before you actually pull out onto the freeway. When making a shoulder check, increase the following distance. Just when you are distracted from the vehicle in front of you (which you are approaching at perhaps 60 km/h) it may suddenly stop. By the time you look back and notice, it may be too late for you to stop. More than a “two second” following distance is required whenever you are not watching the vehicle directly in front of you.

- *The driver of Car 1* was partly at fault for the collision. He should have used the entrance ramp and/or acceleration lane to adjust his speed so that he could merge onto the freeway just ahead of Car 3, or just behind it. By coming to a stop, he exposed himself to the danger of being hit from behind. Stopping at the end of the ramp also would have forced him to pull out onto the freeway at a very slow speed. He could have found another car bearing down on him before he could build up speed.

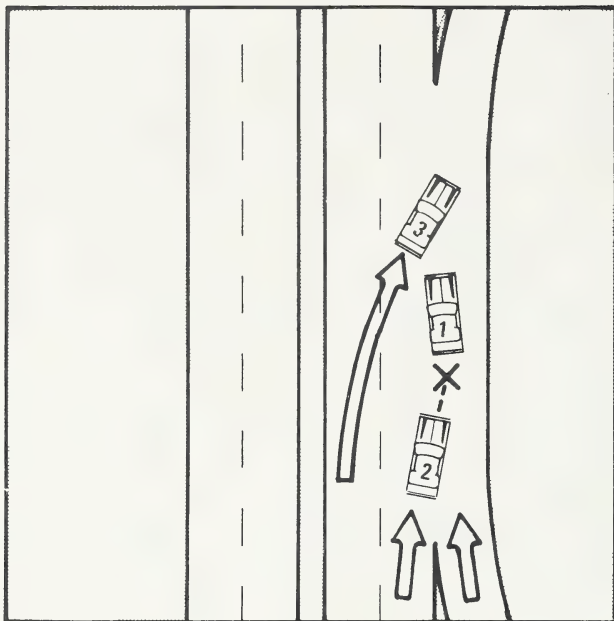
- *The driver of Car 3* also helped cause the collision by staying in the right lane. If he had moved to the left lane, Car 1 would never have had to stop. He could also have slowed down for Car 1. However, because the left lane was clear, a lane change would have been better. Drivers on an entrance ramp can see you changing lanes more easily than they can see you slow down. A lane change also allows more than one car to enter.

Principle Number 1. When you are moving in traffic, never take your eyes off the road ahead for more than an instant. When you are entering a freeway, use the outside mirror to watch traffic on the main roadway.

Principle Number 2. When entering a freeway, use the entrance ramp and/or acceleration lane to build up to the speed of traffic on the roadway. Don't come to a stop at the end of the entrance ramp.

Principle Number 3. Give way to other cars entering a freeway whenever you can safely do so. In addition to doing the other driver a favor, it could protect you from a possible collision.

The Case of the Driver Who Changed His Mind



Car 1 was about to enter the freeway. The driver noticed that Car 2 was slowing to leave the freeway. He increased his speed to pull onto the freeway ahead of Car 2. Meanwhile, the driver of Car 3, travelling in the left lane, realized he was about to miss his exit. He swerved to the right at the last moment and cut off Car 1. The driver of Car 1 slammed on his brakes and was rear-ended by Car 2.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

● *The driver of Car 3* was legally at fault for attempting to exit from the left lane. It is important to watch signs carefully so that you can see an exit coming up well in advance. This way you'll have plenty of time to get in the correct lane.

If you see that you are about to pass your exit, go on to the next one. Last minute lane changes at freeway speeds are always dangerous. And *never* back up on a freeway. Cars approaching from behind won't be able to see that you are backing up until they are on top of you.

- *The driver of Car 1* also helped to cause the collision. His first mistake was trying to enter ahead of Car 2. The way this freeway was designed, cars entering and leaving the freeway have to share the same lane. In this situation, cars leaving the freeway should be given the right-of-way. The driver of Car 1 should have slowed down to let Car 2 move into the entrance lane ahead of him.

The second mistake that the driver of Car 1 made was to move onto the freeway without checking the far lane. If he had looked, he could have seen Car 3 starting to move to the right. This same kind of collision often happens in ordinary lane changes when the driver in the left lane and the driver in the right lane both head for the center lane at the same time.

- *The driver of Car 2* may also have helped to cause the collision by slowing down. This may have encouraged Car 1 to squeeze in ahead of him. A driver who slows down on a freeway also risks being hit from behind. It is important to maintain speed while you are on the freeway. Don't slow down until after you have pulled into the exit lane.

Principle Number 1. Plan your trip before you get on the freeway. Then, watch signs carefully. Make sure you approach an interchange in the correct lane.

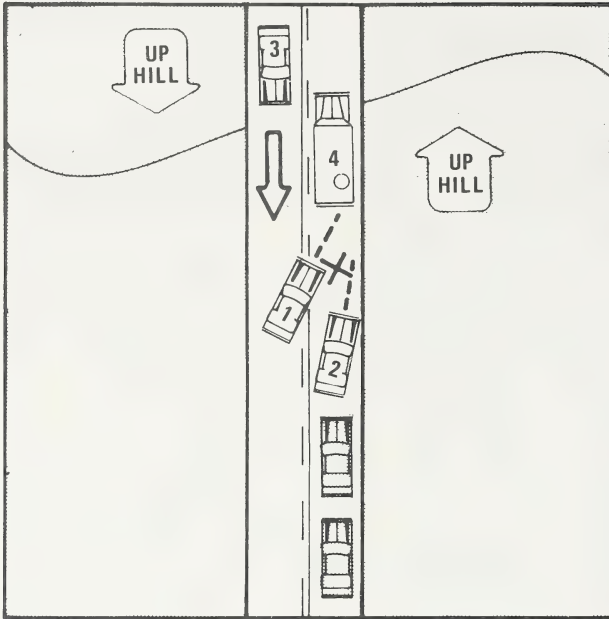
Principle Number 2. Avoid sudden changes in speed or direction. If you are not sure what to do, keep going. Work your way gradually to the side of the road and stop where it is safe.

Principle Number 3. When entering a freeway, yield the right-of-way to cars that are leaving it.

Principle Number 4. Always check all lanes before making a lane change.

Principle Number 5. When leaving a freeway, maintain your speed until after you pull into the exit lane.

The Case of the Impatient Passer



Car 1 was going uphill slowly in a long line of cars that had stacked up behind a slow moving camper, Car 4. The driver of Car 1 was running late, so he pulled out to pass. He had almost cleared the line of cars when an oncoming car, Car 3, came over the hill at a high rate of speed. The driver of Car 1 tried to cut back into line ahead of Car 2. However, the driver of Car 2 would not let him in. The driver of Car 1 had nowhere to go, so he forced his way back into line. Car 2 was pushed off the road, and both cars were badly damaged.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

The driver of the camper?

● *The driver of Car 1 was legally at fault in this collision. He pulled out to pass a line of cars when he could not see oncoming traffic. He broke the law by crossing a solid center line. He thought it was safe to pass because he didn't see anything coming.*

Whenever there is a hill or curve ahead, you have to assume there is another car just beyond it, a car that will come into

view just as soon as you start to pass. In other words, you have to treat a curve or a hill just like an oncoming car.

Another mistake was trying to pass a long line of cars all at once. The more cars you try to pass, the more time it takes; and the more time it takes, the longer you have to stay on the wrong side of the road.

- *The driver of Car 2* helped cause the collision. He could see what was happening and had plenty of time to make room for Car 1. But he was annoyed. He wanted the driver of Car 1 to “pay” for making an unsafe pass. However, he also ended up paying.

- *The driver of Car 3* might have prevented the collision. If he had been coming over the crest of the hill more slowly, there would have been more time for Car 1 to get back into line. He could also have driven onto the shoulder of the road when he saw that Car 1 was still in his lane.

Of course, the driver of Car 3 didn’t know that Car 1 was not in his own lane. But, that is just the point. You never know what is just over the crest of a hill or just around the bend in the road. There could be:

- (1) A stalled car.
- (2) A collision.
- (3) A tractor or other slow moving vehicle.
- (4) A child playing in the road, or someone on a bicycle.

When coming over the crest of a hill, slow down and keep well to the right. There just might be something in the way.

- *The driver of the camper* could have prevented the whole problem in the first place. When he saw cars stacking up behind him, he could have pulled off the road in a safe place and let them pass. Although he had a right to use the road, he did not have the right to block the flow of traffic. Impatient drivers often do dangerous things.

Principle Number 1. Don’t pull out to pass unless you have a clear view ahead. Assume that there might be a car just over the top of any hill, or just around the bend of any curve.

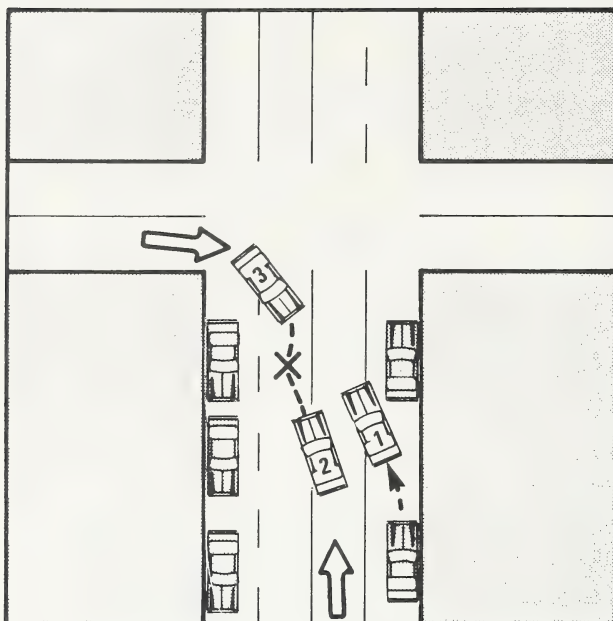
Principle Number 2. Don’t try to pass a long line of cars. Wait until traffic is moving freely again, then you can pass them one at a time.

Principle Number 3. If another driver is in a tight spot, do what you can to help him out of it. You may also be helping yourself.

Principle Number 4. Whenever you approach a point where your view ahead is restricted, slow down. Be ready to react quickly if something is in your path.

Principle Number 5. If you cannot keep pace with traffic, pull into the slow lane. If you are on a two-lane road, watch cars behind you. If they begin to stack up, pull off the road and let them pass.

The Case of the Quick Get-Away



The driver of Car 1 pulled away from the curb just as Car 2 approached at a legal speed of 70 km/h. To avoid hitting Car 1, the driver of Car 2 swerved across the centre line and hit Car 3 head-on. Car 3 had just turned right at the intersection. The driver of Car 3 was killed instantly. The driver of Car 2 lost his left leg.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

● *The driver of Car 1* was legally at fault for pulling out right into the path of Car 2. He was in a hurry and started to pull out before looking behind him. By the time he saw Car 2, he was already part of the way into the driving lane. You should look behind you anytime you change your lane position. This includes turning a corner, changing lanes, entering or leaving a freeway, or pulling away from a curb.

The second mistake the driver of Car 1 made was not giving a turn signal. A signal would at least have warned the driver of Car 2 that something was happening. It is important to give a signal whether you see another car or not.

- *The driver of Car 2* might have prevented the collision by scanning the side of the road as well as watching the path ahead. There were several clues indicating that Car 1 might pull out: someone sitting in the driver's seat, brake lights going on, exhaust. If he had seen any of these clues, he could have slowed down and tapped his horn as a warning.

It is a good idea to tap your horn (or flick your headlights at night) whenever you approach someone who is not facing you. This includes pedestrians and bikers, as well as other drivers.

- *The driver of Car 3* might also have prevented this collision if he had looked to the right before starting his turn. He could have seen Car 1 pulling out and realized that Car 2 might swerve onto the wrong side of the road. It is important to look both ways whenever you enter an intersection.

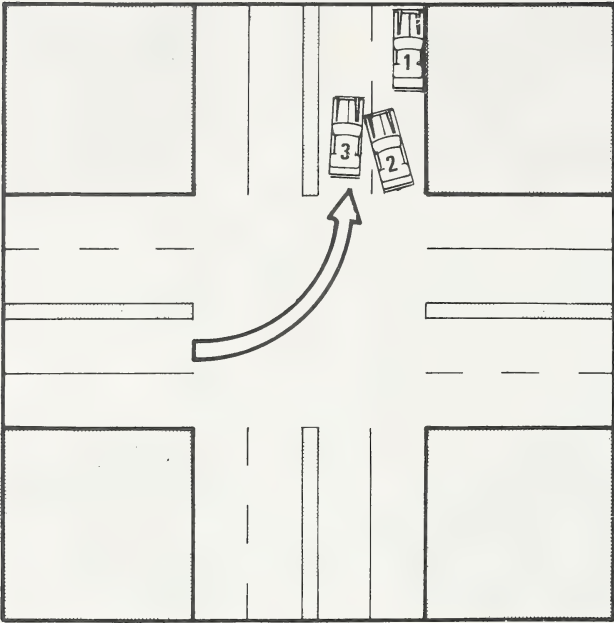
Principle Number 1. Look before you leap! Make sure the way is clear anytime you are going to change your position on the road.

Principle Number 2. Always signal any change of position. Signal whether or not you can see another car. Remember, it is the car you don't see that is most dangerous.

Principle Number 3. Scan both sides of the road ahead. The further away you spot a problem, the more time you will have to deal with it.

Principle Number 4. Never assume the other driver can see you, especially if he is not facing you. Use your horn or lights to warn him you are coming.

Principle Number 5. Always check the path ahead of your car before you turn a corner. Make sure the way is clear before you start your turn.

When One Good Turn Didn't Deserve Another

Cars 1 and 2 turned right at an intersection. Just after completing the turn, Car 1 stopped to let out a passenger. Car 2 swerved into the left lane to avoid hitting Car 1. There it collided with Car 3, which was making a left turn at the same time.

The drivers of Cars 1 and 3 escaped with minor injuries. However, the driver of Car 2 lost the sight of his left eye when his face struck the windshield.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

● *The driver of Car 2* was legally at fault for swinging into the left lane when making a right turn. His real mistake was following Car 1 too closely. It is just as important to leave a two-second following distance when you are turning a corner as it is when you are going straight ahead.

Even though he was following too closely, the driver of Car 2 might have avoided the collision if he had looked to the right before making his turn. Always check the path ahead when turning a corner. This is particularly important at busy intersections where you are likely to find pedestrians crossing with the light.

● *The driver of Car 1* started the whole thing by stopping unexpectedly to let out a passenger. Although he was not legally at fault, he was certainly partly to blame. He was lucky that he was not struck from behind.

Stopping without warning is one of the most common causes of collisions. You are more likely to get hit from behind if you:

- (1) Stop in the middle of an intersection because you don't know which way to turn.
- (2) Stop right after entering a shopping centre to decide where you want to go.
- (3) Stop because you spot someone or someplace you have been looking for.
- (4) Stop to check out a parking place.

It is dangerous to stop suddenly. Always check your rear-view mirror and make sure there is no one right behind you. If there is, keep going until you can warn them, and then slow down gradually.

● *The driver of Car 3* helped to cause the collision by turning at the same time as Car 2. It is true that he had a legal right to the left lane. However, it is dangerous to make a turn at the same time as another car. It is not unusual for a driver to swing wide when turning at an intersection. If the other driver is watching where he is going, he may not even see you.

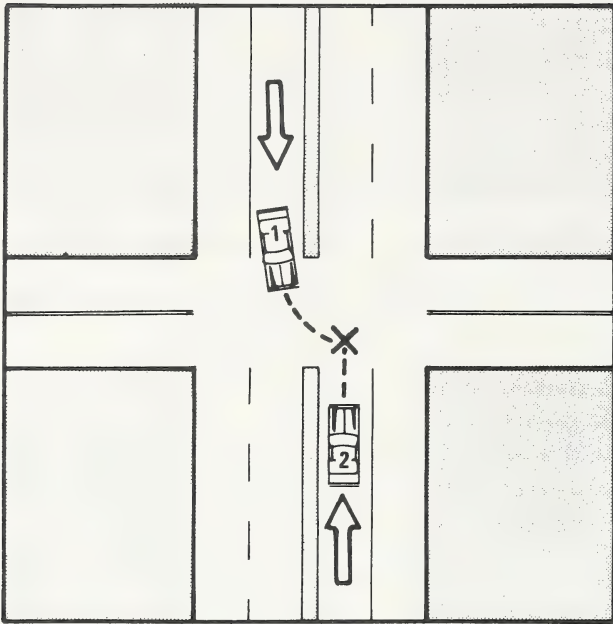
Principle Number 1. Keep a two-second following distance behind the driver ahead as soon as he begins to move. Don't assume he will keep moving just because you can't see any reason for him to stop.

Principle Number 2. Always check the path ahead when you turn a corner. Watch for pedestrians about to enter the street.

Principle Number 3. Pick a safe place to stop in traffic, but don't stop suddenly if you can help it. Always check the rear-view mirror first. If there is someone behind you, give a signal and slow down gradually.

Principle Number 4. Don't make a turn at the same time as another car if you can avoid it. Let the other driver turn first.

The Drivers Who Got Their Signals Crossed



The driver of Car 1 was waiting to make a left turn at an intersection. He saw Car 2 coming with its left turn signal on. So, he started his own turn. But, Car 2 went straight ahead and hit Car 1 on the right front door. The passenger in the front seat of Car 1 spent six months in the hospital. Even after many operations, he lost the use of both legs. Neither of the drivers suffered serious injury. Both cars were damaged beyond repair.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

● *The driver of Car 1* was legally at fault for making a left turn across the path of Car 2. The driver of a car turning left must always yield the right-of-way to traffic going straight ahead.

The mistake that Driver 1 made was to trust the turn signal of Car 2. It might have been left on from an earlier lane change, or the driver may have planned to turn left into a gas station or driveway just beyond the intersection.

Don't enter the path of another driver just because he is signalling a turn. Wait until the turn actually begins. This is the only way you can be sure that (1) he really plans to turn, and (2) his plans haven't changed.

- *The driver of Car 2 made two mistakes. The first mistake was leaving his turn signal on. Anytime you make a lane change or a very gradual turn, you should check to make sure your turn indicator has cancelled itself.*

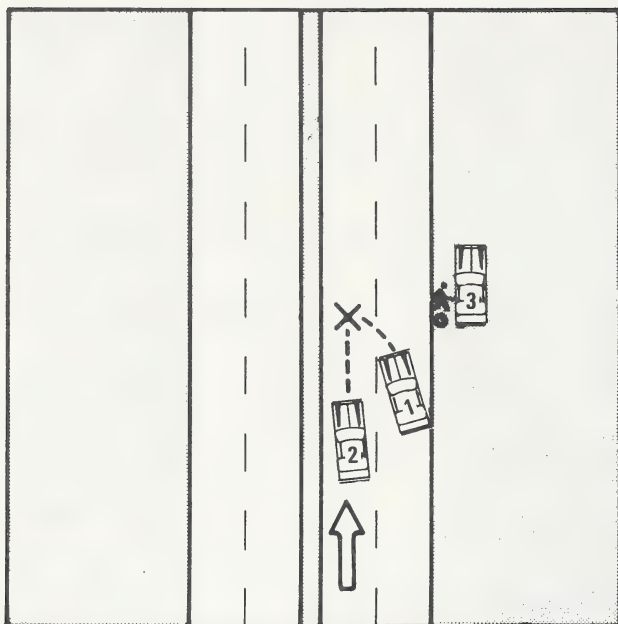
The second mistake that the driver of Car 2 made was to assume that Car 1 would stay put. The fact that the driver of Car 1 was signalling a left turn meant possible danger. Drivers making left turns are often intent on looking where they are going. Sometimes they do not notice oncoming cars.

Just to be on the safe side, the driver of Car 2 should have slowed down, and watched Car 1 carefully, and been prepared to stop in a hurry. In fact, when he saw the driver of Car 1 start to move to the left, he should have honked his horn as a warning.

Principle Number 1. Don't trust your life to another driver's signal. Wait until the car actually begins to turn.

Principle Number 2. Don't assume that a driver who is waiting to turn left will continue to wait. He may misjudge your speed or distance, or he may not even notice you.

The Good Deed That Backfired



Car 1 was travelling east in the right-hand lane. Car 2 was in the left lane just slightly behind Car 1. Car 3 was parked on the shoulder with a flat tire. As the driver of Car 1 approached Car 3, she noticed someone crouched by the side of the car changing a tire. To give the tire-changer plenty of room, she started to swing into the left lane. This forced the driver of Car 2 to swerve to the left. His left front tire scraped a concrete curb, and he lost control and collided with Car 1. The driver of Car 1 then slammed on her brakes, spun across the road, and flipped over. Fortunately, there were no serious injuries.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

The driver of Car 3?

- *The driver of Car 1* was legally at fault for making an unsafe lane change. She claimed she checked her rearview mirror and her outside mirror before starting to turn. However, Car 2 was alongside the left rear portion of her car, where it could not be seen from either mirror. This area is known as the “blind spot”. There are blind spots to the left rear and right rear portions of every car. The only way to be sure of seeing a car in a blind spot is to turn your head and glance over your shoulder.

- *The driver of Car 2* contributed to the collision by driving in Car 1’s blind spot. He could have either pulled forward or dropped back to a position where he could be seen more easily. Or better yet, he could have moved completely away from Car 1. Driving alongside another car puts you in danger if the other driver has to change lanes. It also prevents you from making a sudden (but safe) lane change if you have to.

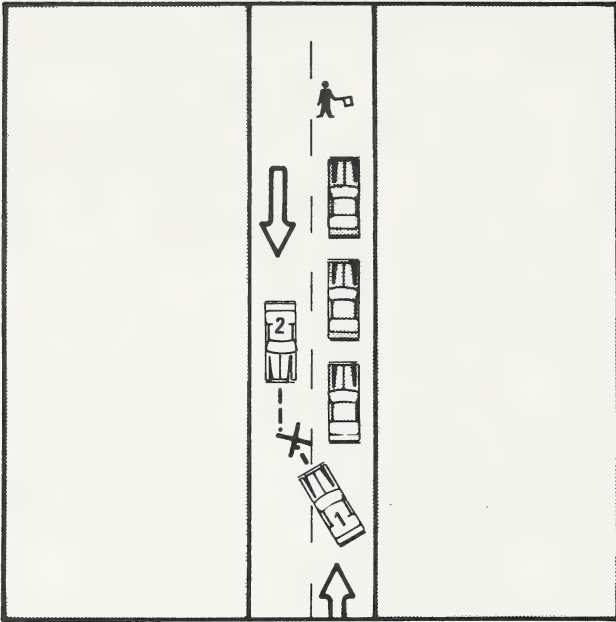
- *The driver of Car 3* contributed to the collision by parking too close to the edge of the main road. In fact, he was lucky that he was not hit by a passing car that got too close to the shoulder. Each year hundreds of drivers are killed in similar situations. Drivers of disabled cars often do not realize how hard it is for other drivers to see them.

If your car is disabled, you should pull well onto the shoulder, as far from the roadway as possible. If this is not possible, you should place some kind of warning at least 60 m behind the car. This will give approaching drivers a little more time to react. In the daytime, have someone stand *on the shoulder* and wave a handkerchief. At night, flares or reflectors are necessary.

Principle Number 1. Always check your blind spots by looking over your shoulder before changing lanes. Also check your blind spots whenever you enter traffic from a curb or freeway entrance lane.

Principle Number 2. Stay out of another driver’s blind spot. Speed up or drop back.

Principle Number 3. If you have to stop along the road, pull as far off the roadway as you can. If you must park near the roadway, put some kind of warning signal at least 60 to 90 m behind your car.



Car 1, travelling at 90 km/h, came upon a line of cars stopped by a flagman near a construction area. The driver did not realize that the cars ahead were stopped until he had almost reached them. He slammed on his brakes and skidded into the left lane, where he collided with Car 2 which was coming in the opposite direction. Both cars were totalled. The driver of Car 1 sustained several severe bruises, and the driver of Car 2 suffered facial cuts from shattered glass.

Who was at fault in this collision?

The driver of Car 1?

The driver of Car 2?

● *The driver of Car 1* was entirely at fault. He simply wasn't paying attention. By the time he noticed the cars ahead had stopped, it was too late to avoid them. Or was it?

By measuring the skid marks, the police were able to tell that Car 1 was at least 45 m from the nearest car when the driver realized what was happening. The police report also

shows that there was a good clear shoulder along the right side of the road. The driver could have used the shoulder to steer around the stopped cars. So, even after his first mistake, he had a chance to avoid a collision.

This is not unusual. A recent study has shown that as many as half of the people who are in automobile collisions could have avoided them at the last minute by handling the car properly.

What should the driver of Car 1 have done?

Threshold Braking. When the driver of Car 1 hit the brakes his wheels locked sending him into a skid. A car cannot be steered while the front wheels are skidding.

The correct procedure would have been to squeeze the brakes firmly and progressively until the wheels approached the point of lock-up without actually locking up, while quickly looking to see whether the best escape was to the right or the left. This would reduce speed as much as possible while the vehicle is going in a straight line. Braking can be done even more quickly by removing engine power to the drive wheels (move automatic shift lever to neutral or depress the clutch on a standard shift vehicle) at the same time the brakes are applied. When the vehicle has slowed down, if it is still not possible to stop prior to reaching the vehicles the brakes must be released and the vehicle steered to the right onto the shoulder.

Locking Up all four wheels is an emergency driving technique used to stop in the shortest possible distance in a true panic situation when other evasive manoeuvres are not feasible. Steering is not possible in this case. If less than four wheels are locked up, stopping power is not as great as with threshold braking and the vehicle may not skid in a straight line.

Principle Number 1. When steering control is important don't slam on the brakes. This locks your wheels. Apply the brakes as hard as you can without skidding the wheels.

Principle Number 2. Pumping the brakes is not the best way. It may cause the wheels to lock and you lose control. You're slowing the vehicle when you pump down but when you lift your foot there's no braking at all. So it takes longer to stop.

Principle Number 3. You can stop quickest with the transmission in neutral.

Principle Number 4. Don't hesitate to leave the road, if it will help you to avoid a collision. At speeds over 50 km/h you can swerve to one side in less distance than it would take you to stop. Pull onto the shoulder if there is one. If there is no shoulder, find someplace else to go. There are often better choices than running into another car.



**You are a good driver . . .
. . . If you want to be.**